



**STRATEGY
RESEARCH
PROJECT**

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**MEETING RECRUITING DEFICIENCIES WITH VETERANS
IN THE CLASSROOMS**

BY

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by

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ABSTRACT

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Both the U.S. military and U.S. public schools are facing challenges manning their systems. The military has contended with manning difficulties since the completion of the downsizing in the mid-1990s. Public schools currently struggle to meet teacher shortages all across the country. Neither problem is being alleviated with the current manning systems. If the military and the schools cannot meet their requirements, then our republic is at risk. This study proposes a solution to the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of Education (DOE), designed to assist them in meeting their specific manning requirements. Currently the Troops-to-Teachers Program, resourced by DOE, provides referral assistance and placement services to service members and DOD civilian employees who are interested in beginning a second career as teachers or teacher's aides. With more aggressive implementation and robust resourcing, this program can increase the number of military veterans seeking teaching careers, thereby reducing critical teacher shortages. Likewise veterans as teachers increase the military influence in the lives of our youth, correspondingly strengthening DOD recruiting efforts.

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MEETING RECRUITING DEFICIENCIES WITH VETERANS IN THE CLASSROOM

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Both the U.S. military and U.S. public schools are facing challenges manning their systems. The military has confronted manning difficulties since the completion of the downsizing in the mid-1990s. Public schools are currently struggling to meet teacher shortages all across the country. Neither problem is being sufficiently alleviated with the current manning systems. If the military and the schools cannot meet these requirements, then our republic is at risk.

PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

This study proposes a potential solution to the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of Education (DOE) to assist in meeting their specific manning requirements. Currently the Troops-to-Teachers Program, resourced by DOE, provides referral assistance and placement services to service members and DOD civilian employees who are interested in beginning a second career as teachers or teacher's aides. With more aggressive implementation and more robust resourcing, this program can increase the number of military veterans pursuing second careers in public education, thereby reducing critical teacher shortages. Likewise veterans as teachers increase military influence in the lives of our youth, correspondingly strengthening DOD recruiting efforts.

RECRUITING THE FORCE

The U.S. military is facing extreme challenges manning the forces necessary to fight and win our nation's wars and carry out frequent operations other than war. The military has had manning difficulties since the completion of the downsizing in the mid-1990s. Current recruiting strategies and systems are not improving the military manning problems. If the military cannot meet these requirements, then our national security is at risk.

Aware of the absence of a superpower threat and lack of concern about all out nuclear war, many of today's youth have difficulty seeing the relevance of the armed forces. They are also wary of the U.S. military's mounting number of peacekeeping roles in foreign countries, regarding such engagements as increasing the hardships and perils of military service. Turned off, too, by the discipline, uniformity, and long hours of military life, many in the target recruiting population of 37 million 17-to-27 year olds regard military life as too demanding. On the other hand, college life and the promise of good jobs in a robust economy have become increasingly appealing.¹

The recruiting challenge is made more daunting because of the military's need for high quality manpower. The pool of potential enlistees is surprisingly small and seems to be shrinking. Because of low birthrates in the late 1970s and early 1980s, moreover, the number of Americans of recruiting age is as small as it has ever been in the 25-year history of the all-volunteer armed forces.² Young people enjoy numerous options for financing a college education, and high school graduates with some skills have little problem finding good jobs. Further, with the advent of the Internet and cable television, reaching that audience with the message of military service has become more complicated and costly.

Nationwide, there are about 14 million high school graduates between the ages of 17 and 21, prime recruiting ages. More than 70 percent of those graduates now attend college, which reduces the pool to less than 4.2 million. But the military considers only those who are physically and medically fit, have no disqualifying police record, and score in the top half of the armed forces standardized aptitude test — all of which further reduces the pool to about 800,000. In 1999, the college attendance rate was 67 percent and was expected to rise to 70 percent in the next decade. The military's select pool will shrink further if other projections that college attendance will rise to 80 percent by 2005 are correct. The armed services' demand for labor is large relative to this pool. In 2000, the military services had a combined recruiting goal for both active and reserve components of nearly 280,000. In other words, to meet these objectives, the services had to attract one in three of the 800,000 young people in the select pool.³

Putting added pressure on recruiters, the military services have increased the target recruiting numbers. The increases come after nearly a decade of reduced recruiting, when the total size of the armed forces shrank by one-third. But to sustain the force of 1.4 million troops, recruiting requirements have increased from a low of 175,000 in 1995 to 196,000 for 2001. Recognizing that only so much money and only so many recruiters can be allocated to meet recruiting goals, services have wrestled with the idea of lowering entrance standards.

Further handicapping military recruiters is the dwindling number of military veterans in the population. In the past, young people might be influenced to enlist by the experience of family members, teachers, or friends who had served. But this is the first generation since World War II whose fathers never had to face conscription. In fact, many parents tend to push their children in the direction of college and civilian careers, portraying military service less as a stepping-stone than a stumbling block.

The cost of recruiting in dollars and manpower has skyrocketed. Specifically, the Air Force spends approximately \$5,500 per recruit and the Army spends nearly \$11,000 per recruit. The

Navy has recently plussed-up their recruiter force to 5,000, which is nearly four times the Air Force's recruiter force of 1,365. The more money spent and the more active-duty recruiters employed, the less money and fighting force the military are able to dedicate to their primary missions.⁴

Interestingly, the top two recruiters for 2000 served in Honolulu and San Antonio, two cities with very high representation of military living and interacting with neighboring civilian communities. In communities where service members are regularly seen and where the military mission and lifestyle are familiar, recruiting is far more successful.⁵ To make the military more attractive, the military needs to expose more Americans to military culture and to make them more aware of the responsibilities of citizenship. The youth of our nation need role models in their day-to-day lives of those who have served our country and fought the fight. They need to be aware that these are the people who are asked to take up arms in the defense of our nation. They are sent forth, on a moment's notice, to be maimed or killed. They care about their country. They willingly make sacrifices to serve their country.

Current recruiting efforts are missing the mark and falling significantly short. The combination of military downsizing and missing recruiting goals has long-term effects on the veteran population. As the veteran population decreases, there are fewer opportunities for these veterans to interact with and influence the nation's youth to military service. In short, young Americans today are insufficiently exposed to the ideals of military service.

DECLINING POPULATION OF MILITARY VETERANS

As the military has downsized over the past decade, the number of military veterans has also been reduced. If there are fewer and fewer veterans in the population, then how does this factor influence the ability to recruit manpower for current and future armed forces? But if the number of military veterans entering public education can be increased, thereby meeting critical teacher shortages, they can as well increase the military influence in the lives of youth. Thus they also assist in DOD recruiting efforts. Both DOD and DOE will emerge winners in the battle for skilled workers.

As of 1 July 1999, about 1 in 4 adult U.S. males was a veteran. The estimated total veteran population has declined 9 percent from 27.3 million in 1990 to 24.4 million in 2000. By 2010, the total veteran population is expected to decline to 20.1 million; and by 2020 it is projected to decline to 16.2 million. Between 2000 and 2020, the year-to-year rate of decline in the total veteran population is projected to be, on average, nearly 7 percent. The total male veteran population is decreasing as a percentage of the population of all adult males: 29 percent in

1990; 24 percent in 2000; 13 percent in 2010; and 13 percent in 2020. But male veterans are also shifting into older age groups as the World War II, Korean and Vietnam veterans' age. Male veterans' percentage of the 65 or over total male population: 55 percent in 1990; 63 percent in 2000; 49 percent in 2010; and 33 percent in 2020. With fewer and fewer military veterans around, fewer young people are influenced to consider a career in the military.⁶

The declining number of military veterans also accounts for the declining number of the nation's leaders who have any kind of military experience. Most members of Congress, political appointees, and military veterans are men. But most members of Congress and political appointees are not veterans. In fact, 30 percent of the U.S. House of Representatives and 38 percent of the U.S. Senators from the 107th Congress served in the military. These elected representatives shape national policy and resource our military and our public educational institutions. Groups representing veterans, such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, and the Disabled American Veterans, have all expressed concern about politicians declining interest, in Veterans' Affairs, and in veterans themselves.

As the second generation of young men and women who have never known anything other than an all-volunteer force comes of age, the presence in the American household of a parent or in the schools of a teacher with military experience continues to decline. In a recent survey, 21 percent of non-veteran parents say they would be "disappointed" if their children entered the military. Given that military missions have become increasingly diverse and often remote from the immediate interests and concerns of the American people, and given that military pay and other compensation has declined relative to the economy as a whole, this is not a surprising view.⁷

So what can be done to reverse this vicious cycle? A smaller military means fewer veterans and thus fewer veterans influence on youth to enter military service. Recruiting challenges and shortfalls thus seem inevitable. So how can these assets be leveraged to better supply the system? If veterans have greater opportunities to interact with our youth and provide positive role models for them to seek military service as an option, our society will benefit greatly. The youth of our country needs the guidance and inspiration of positive role models. Veterans will spread the example of service to country.

The U.S. must make maximum use of veterans. Veterans can be the force multiplier in the current war for bodies, both in the armed forces and the public schools. If the number of military veterans entering public education can be increased to offset critical teacher shortages and to increase the military influence in the lives of our youth to assist in DOD recruiting efforts, both DOD and DOE will emerge winners in the battle for young talent. Not as horrific as the vision of

a war torn battlefield, the battle for meeting our recruiting needs for teachers for our public schools also threatens our way of life. We must find solutions to meet these recruiting challenges into the 21st century.

TEACHER SHORTAGE

Similar to DOD's manning problems, the U.S. public school systems are facing extreme challenges manning the schools with qualified teachers. Public schools struggle to meet teacher shortages all across the country. This problem does not seem to be getting resolved with the current teacher recruiting methods. If the schools cannot meet these requirements, then our republic is at risk.

It is estimated that nearly one-half of America's teachers will be leaving the public school system over the next five years to retire or change careers. In 1999 the National Education Association estimated that 2.2 million teachers should be hired in the next ten years to fill both current and newly created positions.⁸

What is the cause for this great demand for teachers? In the coming decade the population "echo" from the Baby Boom will threaten to swamp the system, compounded by other factors. For example, recent legislation mandates smaller class sizes. Further, fewer young people are inclined to enter the teaching profession especially in mathematics, science, vocational education, and special education.⁹ These problem areas are now approaching crisis proportions. Corporations and high-tech firms are begging for workers. So it is not surprising that a beginning salary close to \$40,000 for computer scientists lures people with strong math and science skills away from teaching.

The long-term consequences of such teacher shortages are substantial. The American economy is fueled by the sciences and technology. Thus the demands for more sophisticated knowledge and skills in these areas will only get greater with the passing of time. Yet math and science teaching, despite all kinds of incentives, is getting weaker because of teacher shortages and adequate instruction. The cycle continues.

Many states are luring potential teachers with signing bonuses, low-cost housing, and tax incentives. Instead of focusing only on pay and perks, the states should loosen their tight grip on traditional teaching accreditation procedures and encourage more non-traditional teachers into the classroom. The conventional wisdom flaunted by the education establishment, especially teachers' unions, is that only graduates with education degrees are qualified to teach. This simply is not true. Many states now have alternative routes to teacher certification, but

they are often complicated and time-consuming. Bureaucratic processes discourage good teaching candidates, to include military veterans, from pursuing teaching as a second career.

So what are other impediments to meeting this teacher shortage? In view of overcrowded classrooms, lack of discipline, schools that are literally falling apart, school violence, student drug use, teen pregnancy, lack of parental involvement, uncaring and overpaid school administrators, teachers being blamed for a laundry list of student and school failures, no incentives for quality instruction (merit pay), no accountability for those who make policy at the top, and the level of teacher's pay, there is no reason to be surprised about the teacher shortage.

But who is better prepared to face these challenges within the teaching profession than a military veteran? Underpaid? Under-appreciated? Uncaring administration? Buildings falling apart? Leadership being blamed for the flawed policy of the politicians? Veterans are not unexposed to such stressors. So how can military veterans be used to help ease the teacher shortage? What tools are at the hands of the policy makers to attract veterans to the classroom?

Whether enough new teachers, including veterans, can be attracted to what is a very demanding job, and whether highly skilled and experienced teachers now at work can be induced to stay are yet to be seen. One thing is clear: The optimism and enthusiasm that compel people to go into educating our country's children should be conscientiously nurtured. Teachers are resources we cannot do without. Until this country values teachers and educating our children the way it should, the state of education will not change.

HOW DO TEACHERS AFFECT AND INFLUENCE THE CAREER CHOICES OF YOUTH?

So if veterans get into the classroom as teachers, how could this influence our youth to pursue military service? There are many perceived influences on high school students' current career expectations. For some insight into their perspectives of the multiple, interacting influences on young peoples' career development, a look into some career theory is necessary.

Developmental career theorists have noted the importance of the adolescent years in laying the foundation for future career and educational pursuits. Theorists have acknowledged adolescence as an important time in the development of interests, perceptions of abilities, and knowledge of the world of work.¹⁰ Role models and key figures in the immediate environment of young people are also viewed as important influences on young people's career development.¹¹ The high school years are also a time when adolescents, whether actively or passively, make critical decisions that relate directly to their postsecondary plans, such as whether to drop out of

school, how many math and science courses to take, or whether to pursue postsecondary education. So examining high school students' career-related perceptions is of both empirical and practical importance.

Bandura's social learning theory suggests that role-model influence is a function of role-model similarity, with greater similarity translating to stronger influence. It seems important to maximize the influence of those who have the greatest access to career-related information in the students' environment. Among the environmental variables, parents, friends, and teachers of the same sex are perceived as most influential. A key gender-role expectation is that males are expected to provide the primary source of income; thus, income was a more important influence for boys.¹²

School counselors can support adolescent career development by targeting interventions into adolescent's lives through collaborating with their families. Counselors can help parents become informed educators and sources of guidance for their children's career development. For example, a parent education program that delineates the process of career development and provides suggestions for parents' career-related interactions with their children can positively influence young people's career choices. In addition, counselors might invite parents to become more familiar with career related resources available to students. For example, counselors can hold periodic parent gatherings in the school's career library to familiarize parents with the resources available to their children.¹³

The perceived influence of teachers on career expectations is a critical link in guiding adolescent career selection. School counselors can help teachers become increasingly positive sources of support and information as adolescents approach the school-to-work, school-to-military service, or the school-to-school transition. Career-focused programs that incorporate or draw on the resources, such as the military experiences, of those with the greatest perceived influence in the adolescent's environment might provide the maximum benefit for adolescents.¹⁴ According to E. L. Herr, "Ecological approaches affirm that complex human behavior responds to environmental stimuli, social metaphors, traditions, and value structures that define the psychological and physical boundaries within which various populations function in their daily transactions."¹⁵ Understanding adolescent perceptions of the influences within their ecology can help counselors maximize support for accomplishing the important career development tasks associated with the high school years.¹⁶

There is no shortage of evidence that teachers' words can carry great weight and can influence a child's direction. Few people have trouble remembering a teacher whose words made a difference. Consider these observations: "This man was like a second father to me,"

and "Here was a teacher who changed my life." There are scores of familiar comments like these. Could a CEO, a computer programmer or a stockbroker elicit this kind of adoration? Maybe so, but a teacher is in a unique position to exert a profound influence on countless young people at a critical time in their lives. Remember the power a teacher can have. With the potential for this much influence, teaching should be one job that attracts bright, dynamic people.

Students basically respect teachers and get along with the good ones. They recognize good instruction and they take full advantage of it. They credit their teachers with inspiring them, turning them on to specific fields of knowledge, and getting them into good colleges. But it seems few of them want to do the same for another generation of kids become teachers themselves. With the high number of single-parent families in the U.S., male teachers also often provide the masculine role model so many children lack: a male who cares for them and who's there everyday; a male who isn't a sports superstar or a Jerry Springer show lowlife; a male who's an exemplar to children developing their notions of gender role models.

Teachers need to capitalize on the opportunities they have with their students to make them feel important, to validate their being, and to encourage their development and offer them the possible choice of military service. Teachers need to look for opportunities to leave an imprint on their student's lives. Teachers need to be prepared, to smile, to listen, to make kids feel important, and to help each student set appropriate goals. In the words of the early twentieth century educator, Henry Adams, "A teacher affects eternity. He can never tell where his influence stops." Teachers do so by influencing their students, giving them lessons to carry into the future, and planting seeds of knowledge that will flower for generations.

At a time when the qualities of good teachers are in sharp debate among politicians, and amongst parents and teachers themselves, we should begin to appreciate the role teachers play in our society. Quality teachers are the cornerstones of our republic. They are the role models our youth look towards for development and guidance. Certainly veterans can play a significant and vital role in teaching our youth the importance of service to country?

TROOPS-TO-TEACHERS PROGRAM OFFERS A SOLUTION

Both the U.S. military and U.S. public schools are facing challenges manning their systems. The military has had manning difficulties since the completion of the downsizing in the mid-1990s. Public schools struggle to meet teacher shortages all across the country. Current manning systems are not alleviating either problem. If the military and the schools cannot meet these requirements, then our republic is at risk. Currently the Troops-to-Teachers Program,

resourced by DOE, provides referral assistance and placement services to service members and civilian employees of DOD who are interested in beginning a second career as teachers or teacher's aides.

The Troops-to-Teachers program was launched in 1994, funded with \$65 million to help the U.S. military ease over a drastic post-cold-war downsizing. Now that the military personnel cuts are over, the program has less political and financial support by Congress. But some educators and veterans groups are urging Congress to keep the program alive, not just because it is still needed by the U.S. military, but because it has been so helpful to American education. Since the program was established in January 1994, over 7,000 former military personnel have been hired as teachers in 50 states and the District of Columbia.¹⁷ More than 83 percent of the participants are still in the classroom today.¹⁸

"Troops-to-Teachers really did provide for the first time a sample of people who are nontraditional teachers, and a very rich pool for the future of teaching," says Emily Feistritzer, President of the National Center for Education Information, a Washington-based research organization. "What distinguishes the Troops-to-Teachers program is its ability to attract more men and minorities with solid life experiences, as well as an interest in teaching subjects (mathematics, science, and special education) in hard-to-staff areas. This pool of more experienced, nontraditional teachers could be a slightly tapped resource for meeting the 2.2 million shortfall in teachers over the next ten years," suggests Feistritzer.¹⁹

Educators urging Congress to maintain this program say that the most important contribution of such teachers is the quality of their life experiences before they got to the classroom. "We need more motivated and mature teachers with successful life experiences to be role models for our students," says Sam Wofford, executive director of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. "We are finding," he adds, "that teachers who enter the profession later are more successful and stay longer."²⁰ Life experience pays off in other ways: These professionals can often relate to parents more effectively than can young instructors. They can talk to parents in a language they can relate to. They have their own kids, so they can relate to the parents about raising kids. Many also are better at keeping their cool than are younger colleagues. Managing 20 kids is a lot easier than defending our country's freedom on the battlefield.

Often the biggest stumbling block to recruiting prospective teachers is money. According to the national average, starting teachers earn \$25,012 a year; even after 20 years, a classroom teacher rarely makes over \$50,000.²¹ Many midcareer entrants just resign themselves to low pay. But why? Since their added life experiences add a positive message to the classroom, wouldn't it make sense to give them higher salaries? Why should they enter into the teaching

profession at entry-level pay, like a 23-year-old teacher fresh out of the traditional education credentialing institutions?

Most mid-career professionals are drawn to teaching for "the chance to do meaningful work; they want to do something that really makes a difference," according to Libby Hall, Director of the Crystal City Teaching Partnership at George Washington University's Graduate School of Education and Human Development. Consider the following comments about Troops-to-Teachers participants from public education officials: "The experience and expertise which the participant has brought to us have been most beneficial, not only to our students, but to our staff as well." "If you have more like the former military officer that we hired, please direct them to us." "Our Troops-to-Teachers participant is the best first-year teacher I have seen in my 26 years as a principal." "I wish I had a school house full of them (Troops-to-Teachers participants)." ²²

Current funding for Troops to Teachers program was passed by Congress as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Bill for FY2001 (HR 5656) on 15 December 2000. This bill provides the DOE \$3 million to continue the Troops-to-Teachers program. Selection of members to participate in the program is made on the basis of applications submitted to the Secretary of Education. Service members selected to participate in the program are required to enter into an agreement with the Secretary of Education in which the member agrees to obtain a teaching credential and agrees to accept full-time employment as a teacher for not less than four years. The Secretary of Education will pay the member a stipend of \$5,000 to enter into this agreement. If the member also agrees to teach in a "high need school," the member instead receives a bonus of \$10,000 for a four-year teaching agreement. The receipt of the stipend or bonus does not reduce or otherwise affect the entitlement of the participant to any benefits under the GI Bill for the additional education and certification courses required to become a credentialed teacher.

Our country needs this kind of creative program. DOE and DOD must work together for solutions to their problems. At the highest levels, they can work creatively to address universal social problems. The influence of teachers on career expectations of our youth cannot be underestimated. From the DOD perspective, this concept must be exploited. From the DOE perspective, this program can have a substantial direct impact on the teacher shortage, on hiring technical area experts, who are mature, disciplined, and organized. With smaller number of veterans, this program offers an effective way to showcase the veteran's message of service to country, which will assist in the recruiting efforts of DOD.

As with any governmental program, funding is the key to proper implementation. Is a \$5,000 stipend or a \$10,000 bonus sufficient to lure veterans into the classroom for a four-year commitment? The after-tax benefit of these bonuses is too small. These bonuses must be larger to entice veterans to choose working with our youth and working in our public schools as the career of choice. So once again, the concept is good, the policy is good, the appropriation is minimal, and the effectiveness of implementation is drastically disadvantaged to the point of being nearly ineffective. Current funding of this program falls drastically short, making the program almost inconsequential.

Shifting sponsorship of the program from DOD to DOE reveals distressing shortsightedness. This program should be a joint venture. Both DOD and DOE win with this program. Stipends and bonuses need to be more robust in order to entice and fully capitalize on this resource. More funding would allure more veterans to pursue teaching as a second profession. More veterans in our classrooms would meet the needs of our public school systems and provide positive role models for our youth. Our society needs this vital program to continue the prosperity and overwhelming strength and power it has realized over the past two centuries.

WORD COUNT = 4619

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